United Nations A/S-19/PV.1

General Assembly
Nineteenth Special Session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Monday, 23 June 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Malaysia

The Temporary President: I declare open the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President: I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/S-19/20)

The Temporary President: Next, I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/S-19/20, which contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General in which he informs the Assembly that 17 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal

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of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

In accordance with precedents, I propose that the members of the Credentials Committee of the nineteenth special session should be the same as those of the fifty-first regular session of the Assembly — namely, China, the Dominican Republic, Gabon, the Netherlands, Paraguay, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall consider the Credentials Committee constituted accordingly.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: In this connection, may I invite the attention of the members of the Assembly to a note verbale from the Secretary-General, dated 7 February 1997, in which it was stated that credentials should be issued for all representatives to the special session, in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I would urge all members to submit the credentials of representatives to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Election of the President of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session

The Temporary President: It has been proposed that the nineteenth special session should take place under the presidency of the President of the fifty-first regular session, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia.

I take it that the Assembly wishes to elect him President of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail and invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Razali took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Razali Ismail, President of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session

The President: I make this speech mindful that we are gathered here to make an objective and honest assessment of the commitments made at the Earth Summit five years ago. Our task of reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21 must go beyond simply calculating ratios of progress versus deterioration. This is a time for critical reflection and concrete action.

Recognizing that we are tied in a network of mutuality and common destiny, and in a spirit of partnership, I extend a warm welcome to representatives of different sectors of civil society. For the first time they as stakeholders, shall participate in the United Nations General Assembly alongside Governments.

In Rio, we recognized that the Earth's biosphere — that thin layer of land, air and water that forms the surface tissue of our beautiful blue planet and upon which all life on Earth depends — is being progressively destroyed. We as a species, as a planet, are teetering on the edge, living unsustainably and perpetuating inequity, and we may soon pass the point of no return. Only a blueprint for global action would ensure our survival. Thus was born the Rio compact and Agenda 21 — a new spirit of partnership, a social, ethical and political contract forged on interdependence, intergenerational equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

There have been some notable achievements since Rio, if somewhat scattered and uneven. Prime among them has been the unfolding of Agenda 21 into a living document beyond the realm of conferences. National strategies, local initiatives, public consciousness and environmental agreements have proliferated, accompanied by tentative reforms of institutions and programmes. On the global level, population growth has stabilized, infant mortality has fallen, life expectancy has increased and nutrition has improved.

The elaboration of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development into legal principles and international law, as enshrined in the conventions, is also a notable achievement. But the end result remains paltry due to the slowness in dealing with issues, the inconsistent fulfilment of agreements and the weak ability to enforce compliance and ensure equitable benefits for all. In this context, should one rush to conclude a

convention on forests if the protracted time needed for the negotiations would provide an excuse for further delays in securing the rights of forest dwellers and implementing best practices?

Five years on from Rio, we face a major recession — not economic, but a recession of spirit, a recession of the very political will that is essential for catalysing real change. The visionary ambition of Agenda 21 is tempered by some damning statistics that show that we are heading further away from, not towards, sustainable development. We continue to consume resources, pollute, and spread and entrench poverty as though we were the last generation on Earth. Failures in the management of natural resources continue to create scarcities, to invite conflict, to pose dangers to public health and to incite social disintegration. Those who made serious commitments at Rio have not followed through on their promises. This is a shame, made tragic because impressive gains in science and technology have advanced our understanding and presented policy options and choices of action to those in power who could make a difference.

We must strip ourselves of old excuses for not tackling effectively enough the driving forces of environmental degradation and underdevelopment. This special session will certainly have failed in the eyes of the world if it produces nothing more than stirring rhetoric that seizes the headlines and exhortations "to continue to do more". We are all familiar with the tactics being used: posturing, spinning declarations of intent, pointing the finger at others, pandering to interest groups, giving weight to short-term profits and immediate electoral gains, and emphasizing the need for clearer definitions, dialogue and information-gathering. These prevent plans of action from truly being operationalized into programmes of implementation.

I challenge Governments North and South to tackle the real obstacles to implementing Agenda 21. We must avoid the temptation to concentrate on just so-called emerging issues. The critical issues are the cross-sectoral issues, those that link environment and development. Since Rio we have seen a further continuation of North-South trench politics. Governments and non-governmental organizations from the developed world vigorously promote environmental protection without shouldering the greater burden of adjustments in consumption and production patterns. Nor do they emphasize with equal balance the importance of fulfilling global and national responsibilities. Meanwhile, many developing countries continue to emphasize their right to development without placing sufficient stress on social equity and transparent, participatory decision-making. Neither approach bodes well for the future.

The Denver Summit communiqué lists priority issues for future work on sustainable development without making any reference to poverty eradication and the special needs of developing countries. The political appeal of environmental issues stole the show. Levels of development assistance are not even graced with the tag of "business as usual". Official development assistance has sharply declined from $55 billion to less than $50 billion since Rio. There are no signs that the decline will be reversed, and this remains a blow to international cooperation. This figure is less than a third of the $150 billion spent on average each year by industrialized countries to procure, research and develop weapons of war. We must be warned that market mantras alone will not secure sustainable development. Neither will the lure of global integration deliver sometime tomorrow on promises we are unwilling to recommit to today and were unable to honour yesterday.

Given the global interdependence recognized at Rio, this meeting not only requires us to reaffirm our previous commitments, but to address a new set of challenges that I pose here as questions. To Governments: "How will you engage in and fulfil global commitments without fearing that you have forsaken the need to look after your national interests first?" Surely it is not that national interests should be compromised in favour of broad international considerations, but simply that national interests can, and should, be defined in terms that encompass the well-being of other States and peoples, tying it into one's own prospects and prosperity.

To the private sector: "Are the imperatives of profit, new markets, competitive edge and commercial secrecy so great that you remain reluctant to have an open and responsible dialogue with other stakeholders?" To members of civil society: "How do you account for five years of lost opportunity?" You are an essential component in this process as producers, consumers, taxpayers, and as supporters and critics of the Governments gathered here today. It is your responsibility to actively participate in sustainable development in your own lives and to demand no less of your political, economic and social institutions.

Finally, it is fitting that we hold this special session three days after the General Assembly adopted the Agenda for Development. The United Nations continues

to work on all aspects of development, seeing it as the vital ingredient in achieving global security and improving social quality and conditions of life for millions. However, its continued weakening, both politically and financially, stretches it too thin, assigns to it missions impossible and makes it a convenient whipping boy. If true value continues to be placed on finding global solutions to global problems, a strengthened United Nations is essential.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

Statement by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General: Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: a very warm welcome to you all.

I am delighted to see so many Heads of State and of Government and so many senior officials in this great Hall today. Your presence here is a welcome demonstration of political will. You have come because you are determined that the process begun five years ago at Rio de Janeiro should not falter. You are convinced that more must be done to safeguard life on our planet, today and for the generations to come.

Our task at this special session, therefore, is to turn that political will into deeds and action. We must aim this week to set a sure course for the world community into the new millennium on this most urgent and vital global issue. Our task is to build on what has been achieved. Our foundation, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the Rio process, is a firm foundation.

UNCED was a landmark in the new global diplomacy. It brought together Governments, non-governmental organizations and concerned individuals as never before. Its objectives, scope and focus were loftier than those of any previous conference, its basis of support broader and its implementing partners more varied. UNCED marked a conceptual breakthrough, too. It gave practical effect to the relationship between environment and development in the new concept of sustainable development. The concept embraces the human and social dimension of sustainable development. It generated new hope that poverty and deprivation can be attacked with greater clarity and coherence.

As we review progress since UNCED, we see some signs of progress. Many countries have reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development that they have established national coordinating mechanisms for sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21. All three of the conventions — on climate change, biodiversity, and combating desertification — entered into force a very short time after they were opened for signature.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Phasing out chlorofluorocarbons — CFCs — is almost complete in the industrial countries. This is an impressive achievement. There has been notable progress in switching to renewable energy sources, such as geothermal, wind-power and photovoltaic systems. The number of people with access to safe water increased by 472 million between 1990 and 1994.

But the balance sheet also has a negative side. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report shows that more than a quarter of the developing world's people still live in absolute poverty. There is concern that there has been virtually no progress in following up UNCED commitments for the transfer of concessional finance and environmentally sound technology to developing countries to assist them in implementing Agenda 21.

Carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise. Worldwide fossil fuel consumption increased from 7.5 billion tons of oil equivalent in 1992 to 8 billion tons in 1996. The rate of depletion of natural forests is at last slowing, but total forest loss continues at an unacceptable rate. While more people have access to safe water, one third of the world's population lives in countries facing moderate to severe stress on water resources. Experts have calculated that, unless there are new efforts to manage global water resources, there will be a world water crisis by the year 2025.

In the world's oceans, the majority of species subject to fishing are now fully exploited, or over-exploited. We are now at, or nearing, the critical point at which overall fishing stocks — not simply single species — begin to decline. It is vital that the Convention to Combat Desertification be implemented as soon as possible. Halting and reversing the march of deserts, especially in Africa, remains an urgent necessity.

The world is hoping for serious progress at the third session, in December, of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held at Kyoto.

At stake this week is the capacity of the international system of States to act decisively in the global interest. The United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes, and the specialized agencies, have worked together to put new ideas, programmes and ways of work into global efforts for sustainable development. My programme for reform in the United Nations will usher in a broader process of renewal in the United Nations. But we must go even further. Governments and the United Nations must join with the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations in a new partnership. Such a partnership, based on a recognition of mutual interest and a readiness to share responsibilities, would link all global environmental stakeholders in an alliance for action. Agenda 21 was unprecedented. We must act in unprecedented ways to implement it.

Failure to act now could endanger our planet irreversibly, unleashing a spiral of increased hunger, deprivation, disease, and squalour. Ultimately, we could face the destabilizing effects of conflict over vital natural resources. But if we raise our sights to the well-being of our planet, and of all those on it, today and in generations to come, we will not fail. We must not fail.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his statement.

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (A/S-19/14)

The President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, His Excellency Mr. Mostafa Tolba of Egypt.

Mr. Tolba (Egypt), Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development: It is a great honour for me to present to the General Assembly at this important special session the report of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which acted as the preparatory body for this session.

Preparations for the five-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was both complex and participatory. The meeting of the CSD was not just a three-week event.

The Commission greatly benefitted from, first, a number of important meetings and initiatives organized in support of the Earth Summit + 5 review by Governments, international institutions and nongovernmental organizations; secondly, an important expert input from the Intersessional Working Group of the Commission when formal intergovernmental discussions on the possible outcome of the special session were launched; thirdly, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests of the CSD, which over the past two years considerably advanced global understanding, commitment and consensus on the world's forests agenda; and fourthly, the report of the United Nations High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development.

The negotiations during the CSD itself were enriched by a crucial political input from the high-level segment held at the commencement of its deliberations, which was attended by a large number of ministers and policy-makers from all parts of the world. The high-level meeting focused on ways and means to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 and gave guidance and impetus to the negotiations in the CSD. The negotiations were also enriched by dialogue sessions with the representatives of all major groups in civil society that shared with Governments their views, concerns and expectations. Highlights of these activities are reflected in the report submitted for the Assembly's consideration.

The report of the Commission also contains the text of the proposed final outcome of the special session. This document covers an assessment of progress, or lack thereof, achieved since the Rio Summit and a set of specific recommendations on further action needed to accelerate movement towards meeting the challenges of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development is, perhaps, one of the most difficult and, at the same time, one of the most pressing and promising goals we face at the turn of the next millennium. It requires on the part of all of us - States, groups and individuals - commitment, action, partnership and, sometimes, sacrifices of our traditional life patterns and personal interests. No wonder that, in spite of a large number of important proposals already recommended by the CSD for adoption by the special session, far from everything in the report of the CSD before the Assembly was agreed during the Commission's session.

During the previous week, intensive intergovernmental consultations were held on all of the outstanding issues contained in the report of the Commission, as well as on the text of the draft political statement. These two documents - the draft political statement and what I would call the draft "programme for further implementation of Agenda 21" - should be seen in conjunction and are expected to be adopted simultaneously by the special session after further negotiations in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

What the Commission and the intergovernmental consultations that followed managed to achieve is to crystallize those most sensitive and politically difficult issues on our common agenda which may not be simply resolved by further drafting or additional exchanges of argumentation. Agreement on these issues will require genuine political will and responsible political decisions in the spirit of partnership and cooperation.

These issues include, but are not limited to, first, strengthening international commitment to means of implementation aimed at accelerating progress towards sustainable development, particularly in the area of financial resources with special reference to the role of official development assistance, economic instruments and their link to trade, mobilization of domestic financial resources, and the nature of the global mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification; secondly, how to continue the process of intergovernmental work on forests; thirdly, a message to the December 1997 Kyoto meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change containing the Assembly's views regarding possible actions with respect to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions: and fourthly, the feasibility of introducing a tax on aviation or aviation fuel.

The results of the work of the Commission - both those which already enjoy consensus and those which require further negotiations — are brought to the General Assembly for consideration and action. I sincerely hope that the leaders of the nations attending this session will say their decisive collective word, which will help all of us to make the lives of this and future generations more prosperous, safe and rewarding.

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Organization of the session (A/S-19/2)

The President: On the basis of the practice of previous special sessions and of the proposals outlined in document A/S-19/2, I should like to suggest the following arrangements for the organization of the nineteenth special session.

Regarding the Chairmen of the Main Committees, I should like to propose that the Chairmen of the Main Committees of the fifty-first regular session serve in the same capacity at the nineteenth special session.

I take it that the Assembly adopts this proposal.

It was so decided.

The President: Accordingly, I should like to inform the Assembly that the Chairmen of the Main Committees at this special session are the following:

The Chairman of the First Committee, His Excellency Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou of Belarus; the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), His Excellency Mr. Alounkèo Kittikhoun of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; the Chairman of the Second Committee, Mr. Arjan Hamburger of the Netherlands; the Chairman of the Third Committee, Mrs. Patricia Espinosa of Mexico; and the Chairman of the Sixth Committee, His Excellency Mr. Ramón Escovar-Salom of Venezuela.

As concerns the Fifth Committee, in the absence of its Chairman, the Secretariat was informed that Mr. Syed Rafiqul Alom of Bangladesh, Vice-Chairman of the Fifth Committee, would be Acting Chairman of the Committee for the duration of the special session.

I should like to propose that the Vice-Presidents of the fifty-first regular session serve in the same capacity at the nineteenth special session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: The Vice-Presidents of the nineteenth special session are therefore the representatives of the following Member States: Andorra, Angola, Bahamas, Burundi, China, Cyprus, France, Ghana, Honduras, Latvia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Niger, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sudan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I should now like to propose that the Assembly establish an ad hoc committee of the whole of the nineteenth special session.

May I take it that the Assembly adopts this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: Concerning the election of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, it has been recommended that the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, His Excellency Mr. Mostafa Tolba of Egypt, serve in the same capacity in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Nineteenth Special Session.

I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly at its nineteenth special session to elect him by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Mostafa Tolba on behalf of the General Assembly and on my own behalf and wish him well in the important and onerous responsibilities that he has just assumed.

In accordance with the practice of special sessions, I also propose that the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee shall be a member of the General Committee of the nineteenth special session.

If I hear no objection, it shall be so decided.

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly has now been fully constituted.

We turn now to matters concerning the participation of observers in the work of the special session.

Members will recall that the General Assembly, in paragraph 4 of resolution 51/181 of 16 December 1996, decided to invite States members of the specialized agencies which are not members of the United Nations to participate in the work of the nineteenth special session in the capacity of observers, namely the Cook Islands, the Holy See, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Switzerland, Tonga and Tuvalu.

Accordingly, I should to inform members that those States were invited to participate as observers in the debate in plenary meeting.

Next, I should like to propose that intergovernmental and other organizations and entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the work of the General Assembly be invited to participate in the debate in plenary meeting. May I take it that the Assembly adopts this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to propose that the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole also hear statements by observers. May I take that the General Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I should now like to propose that representatives of United Nations programmes and specialized agencies be invited to participate in the debate in plenary meeting, provided they are at the highest level. May I take it that the General Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: Additionally, I should like to propose that the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole also hear statements by representatives of United Nations programmes and specialized agencies. May I take it that the General Assembly approves this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly decision 51/467 of 18 April 1997, and without setting a precedent for other special sessions of the Assembly, I have extended invitations to representatives

of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the roster, to participate in the debate in plenary meeting.

Also in accordance with General Assembly decision 51/467 of 18 April 1997, representatives of such major groups who could not be accommodated in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 in plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session may be invited to address the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

I should like to inform members that the Inter-Parliamentary Union has requested to make a statement in the debate in plenary meeting at this special session.

In this connection, I have undertaken consultations with the regional groups. It is my understanding that there is no objection to the request by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly, without setting a precedent, agrees to hear a statement by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the debate in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: With regard to the list of speakers in the debate in plenary meeting, I should like to remind representatives that, owing to time constraints, the list of speakers was established on the understanding that the length of statements would not exceed seven minutes.

In connection with the seven-minute limit, a light system has been installed at the speaker's rostrum, which functions as follows: a green light will be activated at the start of the speaker's statement, an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the seven minutes, and a red light will be activated when the seven-minute limit has elapsed.

I should like to appeal to participants in the debate in plenary meeting to cooperate in limiting their statements to seven minutes so that all those inscribed on the list of speakers for a given meeting will be heard at that meeting.

In view of the large number of representatives already inscribed on the list of speakers, I should like to inform members that I intend to start the plenary meetings punctually at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

In this connection, I should like to assure the Assembly that I shall be in the Chair punctually at the scheduled time. I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort to cooperate in this regard.

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda (A/S-19/1)

The President: In order to expedite our work, the Assembly may wish to consider the provisional agenda in plenary meeting without referring it to the General Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to this procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it then that the Assembly wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as it appears in document A/S-19/1?

The agenda was adopted.

The President: Regarding the allocation of items, I should like to propose that agenda item 8, entitled "Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21", be allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the nineteenth special session for consideration, on the understanding that the debate on the item shall take place in plenary meeting.

May I take it the Assembly wishes to adopt this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: In connection with agenda item 8, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/S-19/19, which contains a list of documents before the Assembly for its consideration at the nineteenth special session. In accordance with the decision just taken, this list is referred to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for its consideration.

May I also take it that, bearing in mind the practice of the General Assembly, it is the wish of the Assembly to consider agenda item 9 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8

Overall review and appraisal of implementation of Agenda 21

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Cardoso *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation):* Brazil comes to this special session of the General Assembly to state its willingness to remain at the forefront of the process that led to one of the most meaningful moments in international understanding.

Rio in 1992 paved the way for a new global partnership and economic growth based on social justice and the sustainable use of natural resources. This international accord, based on the ethics of shared responsibility and cooperation, is none other than the "spirit of Rio", the most important legacy of the Conference, which we must strive to rekindle.

The five years that have elapsed since the Rio Conference have clearly shown that changes in the global, political and economic structure have not been followed through by commensurate progress in the war on poverty and against the predatory use of natural resources.

In order to advance this agenda, more will have to be done that merely looking complacently to the past. We must once again uphold sustainable development as a priority in international relations, not to accuse, not to intervene, not for hegemony or power, but to cooperate. We must correct the imbalance that has emerged between the advances in the agenda of political and economic freedom on the one hand and that of sustainable development on the other.

Environmental awareness is now an inseparable dimension of citizenship. Protection of the environment has been fully incorporated into the domestic political agenda of countries. The Rio + 5 conference held this past March was an eloquent example of the positive action of the non-governmental organizations on environmental issues. It gave renewed thrust to the debate on sustainable development and marked a resurgence of environmental awareness.

In order to create a focal point for international public opinion with regard to sustainable development, Brazil is prepared to host, in Rio de Janeiro, a Rio forum on environment and development. This is one way to keep the "spirit of Rio" alive, making our city of Rio the international capital of sustainable development.

At this session, we must identify, objectively and judiciously, the areas in which no progress has been made and come to terms with the fact that today's challenges are even greater than those of five years ago. We have moved forward in the consideration of critical issues such as climate change, biodiversity, forests and desertification. Progress, however, has been hindered by a lack of effective means of implementation and financing. In some cases, we have yet to overcome the stalemate in negotiations. Brazil has submitted concrete proposals regarding climate, biodiversity and forests.

Poverty and environmental degradation, particularly in urban areas, continue to affect the living standards of hundreds of millions of people all over the world. There is an urban environmental agenda as important as the so-called green agenda.

We must expand awareness of the importance of protecting the oceans, which are the basis of life itself. In this connection, we must stimulate initiatives such as the independent World Commission on the Oceans, headed by the former President of Portugal, Mario Soares. Water has already become one of the most pressing issues on the agenda for the next century.

Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption still abound.

Lack of consistency in honouring commitments to international cooperation undermines the spirit of the partnership forged at Rio de Janeiro. It has become easier to blame and to accuse than to act. The environment is now used as a pretext for protectionist practices that undermine the foundations of an open and non-discriminatory international economic system. We must regain the balance achieved at Rio. We must not sacrifice sustainable development for the sake of illusory economic efficiency.

Brazil, a country endowed with environmental assets that rank among the planet's largest and most diversified, is firmly committed to the vision of the future designed at Rio de Janeiro. Our Constitution enshrines the basic concepts of sustainable development. In addition to our

National Agenda 21, we are in the process of developing regional and local agendas that reflect the challenge posed by the continental proportions of our territory. We have modern environmental legislation, which we continue to complement and enhance. We have emphasized the coordination of economic and environmental policies. An example is our Green Protocol, designed to dovetail financing resources with environmental protection.

We have sought the participation of civil society in environmental management and we have decentralized resources and action. We have set aside 5.22 per cent of Brazil's territory, the equivalent of 446,000 square kilometres, for national parks and ecological sanctuaries: remarkable figures by any standard. The new integrated national policy for the Amazon aims at redirecting economic growth and fostering the development of the Amazonian people. The pilot programme for the protection of the tropical forests of Brazil is at present one of the most noteworthy examples of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Within the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), we are in the process of completing a unified legal instrument on the environment. We have considerable experience in many areas of interest to environmental preservation, and we are ready to make this available to our partners.

This is why Brazil joined in an initiative with Germany, Singapore and South Africa to contribute to the common effort to define priorities for action in the future. We want to set an example of how countries in differing stages of development can demonstrate, through creativity and concerted action, the political will to render Agenda 21 a concrete reality.

The challenges we must face to reach this goal are manifold: renewing our efforts in the war on poverty; broadening the environmental agenda to include the urban environment; strengthening the structure of the United Nations in the area of environment, making it more efficient; promoting the constructive participation of non-governmental organizations in the social debate, engaging the working and business sectors; promoting action by like-minded countries without necessarily awaiting or expecting full consensus before taking action; recognizing that the commitments made in 1992 require a substantial flow of new and additional resources, as well as the transfer of environmentally sound technology; and giving priority to basic education, and in particular to environmental education, as an inherent manifestation of citizenship and as a mainstay of sustainable development.

Then, and only then, will we be able to rekindle the spirit of Rio. Let us do it together, in cooperation and in peace.

The President: I thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for his statement.

Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Mugabe: I wish to begin by welcoming the convening of this special session of the General Assembly, the very first such gathering since the Rio Summit and the adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992. This session has brought together Heads of State and Government to review and appraise progress made so far in the implementation of Agenda 21.

In Africa, the social and economic situation, compared to that of other developing countries, does not justify much boasting. On the contrary, frustration, despair and disillusionment continue to plague African countries. For a variety of reasons, Africa, the most economically backward region of the world, is in the midst of a profound economic and social crisis.

The global picture shows that gross domestic product growth rates have indeed been positive for developing countries generally, averaging 5.3 per cent per annum from 1992 to 1996. But for Africa south of the Sahara, and to some extent Eastern Europe, the rates were much lower and often not able to exceed population growth rates. Zimbabwe is not an exception in this regard, despite the positive measures that the Zimbabwe Government has taken.

The soaring levels of unemployment, the fast-deteriorating standards of living and the ever-deepening cycle of poverty have all contributed to greater degradation of the environment, particularly the further depletion of forests and the pollution worldwide of land,

air and water. Africa alone is estimated to suffer from deforestation at the rate of 3.6 million hectares per year. Its share of future carbon dioxide emissions is projected to rise to between 12 and 16 per cent of the global total by the year 2001.

The general trend for the whole world, whether we consider countries or individuals, has been for the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer. The alleviation of hunger and poverty has not shown any remarkable progress anywhere. The gap has widened and will continue to do so. Rich, developed countries continue to be magnets for infusions of capital and potential investors. The poor developing countries have become even more dependent on aid, whatever there is of it available. It is estimated in this regard that since 1992 as many as 1.5 billion people have become poorer, and these live in developing rather than developed countries.

Recent statistics on world population growth have indicated that the human race will by the turn of the century total 5.6 billion. Because of population pressure on land, 3.3 billion hectares of productive land are set to be a worthless desert by the year 2000. These statistics provide a sombre picture of a globe which our future generations might find uninhabitable because of our present-day irresponsible and myopic activities.

It is also clear that there has been no fundamental departure from past trends in the consumption of energy. Fossil fuels — oil, gas, coal — have continued to be the basic sources of energy. Renewable energy sources have not received the attention they deserve. In recognition of the importance of the use of renewable sources of energy, Zimbabwe hosted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Solar Summit at which the Heads of State and Government who were present adopted the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

Energy has emerged as one of the priority issues since Rio. I must add that the energy crisis impacts not only urban areas but rural areas and communities as well. It is strongly believed that the use of solar energy could be an answer to clean and infinite energy; hence the urgent call for the funding of investment and research in affordable renewable energy, particularly solar energy.

The Rio Summit called upon Governments to make money available to implement Agenda 21 within their own countries. As current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, allow me to mention a number of issues of importance to Africa which this special session must consider. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has clearly pointed to the negative effects of globalization trends that characterize the situation of African countries. The CSD report notes that most countries have shown slow or even negative growth and continue to be marginalized. These trends can be reversed only through international cooperation.

We in Africa, despite our meagre resources and other limitations, have gone a long way towards trying to meet our side of the bargain. As the problems confronting developing countries and Africa are both manifold and complex, their solutions require the concerted efforts of the international community. The United Nations system offers the best forum for constructive international dialogue and cooperation on social and economic development.

I therefore call upon this session to take heed of the call by the Pan-African Conference of the African Ministers of Environment held in March this year in Burkina Faso. In their Ouagadougou Declaration, the Ministers exhorted the international community to assist in the process of elaborating a regional action programme for Africa. Such an action programme on the environment and sustainable development could tackle the most pressing issues of environmental degradation.

The international community seems to remember the existence of Africa only when disaster strikes the continent. Yet in Africa, as in other developing regions, poverty is the single most serious contributor to environmental degradation associated with land abuse, deforestation and the lack of access to fresh water.

If financial resources were forthcoming, Africa would refrain from killing wild animals for food, cutting down trees for energy and polluting water resources for lack of appropriate technologies. I wish therefore to urge developed countries to honour their commitments made at Rio and at the various United Nations forums since then. In this regard, the agreed United Nations target of committing 0.7 per cent and 0.15 per cent of gross national product to developing and least developed countries, respectively, would go a long way in assisting these countries to achieve sustainable development.

This session should also address the disturbing phenomenon of de-industrialization that is now manifesting itself in a number of countries. There can be no sustainable development without industrialization.

Developing countries, particularly those in Africa, continue to be marginalized as they are subjected to the relentless and, in some way, irreversible twin processes of globalization and liberalization. This special session should mandate the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to undertake a comprehensive empirical study and report back on the implications and consequences of globalization and liberalization for sustainable development.

In some of our countries, indigenous entrepreneurs are being choked out of the industrial arena at a time when Governments are giving way to private enterprise. Transnational corporations are the major actors and are, unfortunately, depleting natural resources and polluting the environment in the process of globalization and liberalization. The World Trade Organization has assisted transnational corporations with global economic opportunities but has not inculcated in them responsibilities for the environment, as we are witnessing cut-throat competition and corporate avarice undermining the whole process of sustainable development.

There can be no preservation of the environment amidst the massive and pandemic prevalence of poverty, ignorance and disease, and these cannot be eradicated in the absence of sustainable development. This organic link between the environment and development is what has been woefully ignored since the Earth Summit in Rio. We observe in the annex to the note by the Secretary-General that it is the collective view of the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system participating in the Administrative Committee on Coordination that

> "The expectations of additional resources raised at Rio have not been fulfilled." *(A/S-19/6, para. 11)*

The Global Environment Facility has been a woeful failure. If this is seen against the backdrop of the unprecedented financial crisis that now bedevils the entire United Nations system, one cannot but begin to question whether there is still any genuine commitment to multilateralism. As a signatory to Agenda 21, Zimbabwe has incorporated the Rio goals into ecological, cultural, gender and economic development programmes. We fully acknowledge that national Governments shoulder the primary responsibility for the implementation of Agenda 21 in their territories.

What we have witnessed in the five years after Rio has been a nearly complete halt to international dialogue on environment and sustainable development. This is a severe setback to our efforts at forging and strengthening multilateralism. The spirit and the outcome of this special session of the United Nations General Assembly should spur us to translate into concrete reality the vigour and seriousness which characterized the Earth Summit in Rio.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for his statement.

Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Hashimoto (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text furnished by the delegation*): I would like to express my profound gratitude for having been given this opportunity to present my views today.

At the Earth Summit five years ago, the international community initiated a grand effort to protect our beautiful planet Earth and permanently ensure prosperous and peaceful lives for all humankind. Regrettably, however, despite the enormous efforts of the international community since then, the global environment remains gripped by many problems. If the situation remains as it is, it may be difficult to pass on this irreplaceable Earth to the twenty-first century. Now let us renew our determination and seriously consider concrete measures to promote sustainable development, a goal upon which we agreed at Rio de Janeiro.

Immediately before coming here, I renewed my determination, together with the other leaders at the Summit of the Eight held in Denver, to preserve the global environment. I would like to stress two points: our responsibility to future generations and global human security. Bearing these points in mind, it is necessary that each of us develop a strong consciousness and shoulder our responsibilities. We must change our lifestyles. Moreover, it is necessary to develop innovative environmental technologies and to promote their transfer to developing countries in order to foster sustainable development.

In the light of the need today for a global effort to tackle environmental issues, the United Nations is assuming ever greater importance. Let us renew our pledge to cooperate with the United Nations.

Among our many environmental problems, global climate change stands out as a serious issue that directly affects not only the lives of people today but also the future existence of the human race. The third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be convened in our ancient capital of Kyoto in December. We must spare no effort to ensure a successful conclusion of the Conference. The eight countries at the Denver Summit agreed that they intend to commit to meaningful, realistic and equitable targets that will result in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2010. This is a message addressed to this special session as well. Let us also demonstrate at this special session, as the general will of the United Nations, our firm commitment to the success of the Kyoto Conference. I assure the Assembly that Japan is resolved to do its utmost in this regard, and I sincerely appeal to all the countries gathered here to extend their cooperation to the Kyoto Conference.

It goes without saying that we must also strive, from a medium- and long-term perspective, to solve the issue of global climate change. For example, if we want to stabilize the density of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere at a level about twice as high as it was before the industrial revolution, it will be necessary to reduce global per capita carbon dioxide emissions to one ton by the year 2100. This is a great challenge that cannot be met with existing technology, and it will be necessary for the whole world to unite in order to achieve this objective. For this purpose and in order to accelerate, with international cooperation, efforts to prevent global warming, I would like to propose an initiative to be called the "comprehensive strategy for the prevention of global warming", or "green initiative". It will consist of two pillars: "green technology" and "green aid". Under green technology, we would promote the efforts of developed countries in the development and dissemination of energy conservation technologies; the introduction of non-fossil energy sources, such as photovoltaic power generation; the development of innovative energy and environmental technologies; and worldwide afforestation and forest preservation. Under green aid, we would utilize official development assistance and private financial resources to cope with the issues of energy and global warming and promote cooperation with developing countries through the development of human resources.

I appeal to like-minded countries for their participation and cooperation.

In the past, Japan had a very serious pollution problem, and on reflection, it has successfully strengthened its environmental policies in a fundamental way. Also, since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Japan has enacted its Basic Environmental Law and established its Basic Environmental Plan, thereby making its new environmental policies clear. At the winter Olympic Games, which will be held in Nagano next year, every possible consideration will be given to the preservation of the environment. And we have declared "Preserve and Nurture the Natural Environment" as the theme of the Aichi Expo, which will be held in the year 2005. Japan is prepared to present not only its successes but also its failures, and to cooperate with others so that its mistakes will not be repeated.

Official development assistance plays an important role in promoting sustainable development in developing countries. Japan's official development assistance adheres to the principle that environmental conservation and development should be pursued in tandem. Japan reached the ambitious target it set for itself at the Earth Summit, and actually exceeded the targeted amount of official development assistance in the environmental field by more than 40 per cent, providing ¥1.44 trillion — approximately $13.3 billion — in assistance over the five-year period.

Although my Government is now facing severe budgetary constraints, it will give the greatest possible consideration to official development assistance in the area of the environment. As a second initiative, I would like to announce that we shall promote for developing countries a new plan entitled Initiatives for Sustainable Development towards the Twenty-first Century (ISD). The plan of action under the Initiatives is as follows.

First, with regard to air and water pollution measures, Japan will promote the establishment of an acid deposition monitoring network in East Asia. By utilizing the environmental centres to the establishment of which it has contributed, Japan will, for example, enhance the monitoring capacity of individual countries and also work to establish an information network on pollution. Moreover, it will further promote the transfer of environmental technologies for the prevention of pollution.

Secondly, on the issue of global warming, Japan will promote the transfer to developing countries of technologies related to the conservation of energy and new energy sources, including transfers under the scheme of green aid, to which I referred a moment ago.

Thirdly, with regard to water issues, Japan will further promote the creation of water and sewage systems and will continue to work to prevent the health problems and the harmful effects on the environments in which people live that are caused by water pollution.

The fourth issue is the preservation of the natural environment, and the issue of forests is especially important. We will promote cooperation for efforts to afforest wide areas. In the area of the preservation of biodiversity, we will promote efforts mainly through the Biodiversity Centre in Indonesia, which was established through the cooperative efforts of Indonesia, the United States and Japan. With regard to the preservation of coral reefs, we will establish a research centre on coral reef preservation in Asia and the Pacific which may be expected to play a central role in creating a network for research cooperation.

Last, but no less important, is the promotion of environmental education. We believe that heightening the environmental awareness of all people through environmental education is fundamental to the creation of an environmentally sound world. We intend to cooperate in promoting worldwide environmental study programmes and to support cooperation in international research by establishing an institute of global environmental strategies, which will engage in strategic research and study means of policy development, among other tasks.

From the depths of post-war devastation and despair, Japan has achieved rapid economic growth since the end of the Second World War and has experienced severe pollution problems in the process. There is perhaps no other country that can share both the suffering of a developing country and the concerns of a developed country to the extent that Japan can. This is why Japan makes it a national policy to cooperate in the promotion of sustainable development. I pledge that I shall make every effort to ensure that this beautiful planet Earth is passed on to the twenty-first century. Now let us launch the partnership for global environmental preservation and development.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of Japan for his statement.

Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Mkapa: In 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, world leaders and many non-governmental organizations discussed the global environment and development. They set lofty objectives and undertook solemn commitments to enhance sustainable economic and social development and to protect the environment on which such development depends. Agenda 21 was a universal commitment to an unprecedented and necessary global partnership to ensure the future welfare of humanity and the survival of its civilization.

Today we must make an honest review of the distance we have travelled individually and collectively towards that goal and see whether we can recharge that Rio spirit of global partnership. Has Agenda 21 received the national and international political support it so much deserves and needs if it is to succeed? The stakes are palpable, and the actors have been identified and the modalities agreed upon. To try to renegotiate those noble commitments freely undertaken in 1992 would be to backtrack on the Rio global consensus and would slow down the momentum already achieved, which, if lost, might never be recaptured.

We knew and accepted that there would be no painless adjustments and solutions, and that to succeed we needed global partnership. The consequences of environmental degradation and pollution respect no borders. They affect equally the polluters and those who do not pollute, the rich and the poor — hence, the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Notable progress has been achieved, especially by developing countries, in the implementation of Agenda 21. International environmental conventions, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification have been concluded and are now in force. But these and other successes remain modest by

ndards we had in mind in 1992, and we still have to w they will be implemented.

t Rio, for example, we agreed on the United Nations of developed countries contributing 0.7 per cent of ross national product towards official development nce. That contribution has in fact declined since Rio, n average of O.34 per cent in 1992 to 0.25 per cent On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I should thank the four countries of the Organization for mic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that have d this United Nations target.

he capacity of developing countries to implement a 21 depends critically on increased flows of net l development assistance to them. Each decline in l development assistance therefore erodes the y of developing countries to implement the Rio ents and action plan. That is why environmental ation, which could easily have been prevented, has ed. Poverty has worsened in some areas, and income lity within and between nations has widened.

he Global Environmental Facility (GEF) capital also to be increased substantially to enable it to provide te finance for the programmes that are within its te, as well as for new areas which do not yet have g mechanisms of their own, such as the Convention ertification and drought.

Many developing countries accept that private nent and trade are more secure and dignified tions for sustainable growth and development. We noted substantial increases in net foreign direct nent to developing countries and recent developments up of Seven policy to promote trade and investment ica. But we must not forget that first, the focus of n direct investment is always on projects that yield returns, and not necessarily on those that are tible with the Rio goals of sustainable development. lly, least developed countries still do not have that of human resource capacity and infrastructural pment necessary to attract foreign direct investment. nake far-reaching political and economic reforms and ue to improve their investment and regulatory s. But a lot of investments are required to build the ary financial and human capacity, to build the ary infrastructure, and to create larger integrated ts. Such investments will continue to need and l primarily on official development assistance g, not on foreign direct investment.

Africa's external debt is unsustainable and a major drag on initiatives for growth, development and environmental conservation. Debt service is gobbling up over 30 per cent of Africa's export revenues, 25 per cent of our savings and over 4 per cent of our gross domestic product. Such a burden is clearly unmanageable. Multilateral debt, which in Africa accounts for nearly half of the total debt service, is a major area of concern. We appreciate recent initiatives for debt relief, but when criteria for eligibility are too stringent, or if the promised relief is to be realized in the too-distant future, the medicine may arrive when the patient is beyond help.

In Rio we recognized that technology transfer is essential if developing countries are to make the transition to sustainable development. We need, therefore, to arrive at internationally agreed modalities on how to transfer technology from developed to developing countries on a predictable and sustainable basis. This cannot be achieved through market forces or the private sector alone. It is necessary to have publicly funded technology projects, including the establishment of regional technology centres, to encourage development and transfer of technology, on concessional terms. Developed countries should give practical support to such programmes, and conditions for the transfer of technology, particularly of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries, should be relaxed.

We have all sought to address environmental degradation caused by unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in the developed countries.

The World Solar Summit took place in Harare in September last year, and on that occasion the importance of developing solar energy as a clean and renewable source of energy was underlined. Many developing countries have come up with solar energy projects that could be very useful in that regard. They are projects that deserve and require active and practical support from the developed countries.

This special session should mark the beginning of a renewed spirit of global and practical partnership for sustainable development and poverty reduction measures through increased official development assistance and foreign direct investment, for financing capacity-building, and for preferential and unrestricted access to the markets of developed countries. We should leave here with clear targets and goals, with set time frames and identified

means for their achievement, taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

This is the kind of global and practical partnership to which the Group of 77 and China commit themselves for the common good of future generations.

The President: I thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for his statement.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Kok (Netherlands): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia align themselves with this statement.

This special session of the General Assembly offers us a welcome opportunity, first, to take stock of the progress we have made since the Rio Summit of 1992 and, secondly, to set out policy lines for the coming years. We have to aim for worldwide sustainable development. This is achievable only if we choose coherent and well-coordinated environmental, economic and social policies. We need a sustainable balance between environmental protection and economic growth. Development is sustainable only if we eradicate poverty, promote employment, foster social integration, implement democratic governance, promote gender equality and respect all human rights.

Our search for sustainable development implies a change in patterns of production and consumption. Within Europe we will discourage the inefficient use of scarce raw materials and energy. Prices should reflect environmental costs. We want economic growth which puts less and less pressure on the environment. Since Rio we have gradually worked in this direction. We now realize that we have to intensify our efforts. Changes in consumption are just as necessary. Conspicuous and wasteful consumption by the affluent is a strain on resources and an injustice to the poor; it is detrimental to public health and well-being.

The environment is a priority issue worldwide, both in public life and in the private sector. We are in danger of passing thresholds beyond which serious damage will occur, some of it irreversible. And even if part of the damage is reparable, it would be at an unnecessarily or even unaffordably high price. To safeguard future generations from this danger and burden, it is our duty to act now.

Climate change is a global problem. The industrialized world should take the lead in reducing its emissions of greenhouse gasses. The developed countries should conclude a legally binding commitment in Kyoto. The European Union has agreed to a phased reduction of the emissions of greenhouse gasses of, on average, 15 per cent below the 1990 level by the year 2010. Mandatory and recommended policies and measures, including harmonized ones, must ensure that this target is achieved.

In many places around the globe, we are running up against the limits of the availability of fresh water. It is necessary to put awareness of the impending water crises higher up the international agenda. A more integrated approach must be ensured so that water and land management are looked at together. Priority should be given to safe drinking water, sufficient water of good quality for other purposes and the integrated management of watersheds.

Deforestation is continuing at a rate of over 11 million hectares per year. In Rio, our countries adopted the Forest Principles. Now is the time to go one step further and start the negotiating process for a global convention on forests, which should be open for signature in the year 2000. We are ready to continue to provide substantial financial support to this purpose.

Desertification torments many parts of the world, notably in Africa. The European Union calls on the international community to support the global mechanism to implement the Convention. We are already devoting considerable resources to this end and are ready to do more, preferably together with other donors.

Various problems continue to hinder the promotion of one of the major aims of Agenda 21: technology transfer from the rich to the poor. We are ready to

engage ourselves to promote technology transfer in a multilateral framework.

Recently, the European Union launched three initiatives. First, there must be an efficient and equitable distribution of water resources and their integrated, sustainable management. Secondly, concerted action is required to provide for coordinated, sustainable energy policies. Thirdly, studies have indicated that, 50 years from now, the world will need a tenfold increase in eco-efficiency. Economic development without vastly improved efficiency in the use of natural resources and energy will gradually but inevitably come to a complete standstill. The European Union has proposed to study the feasibility of a fourfold increase in eco-efficiency, which should be achieved within two to three decades.

No matter how important development assistance may be, it should never be seen as a substitute for the mobilization of domestic resources and foreign investment. Foreign direct investment to developing nations has multiplied sixfold during the nineties, but it still reaches too few recipient countries. We have to make sure that investments are directed in such a way that they directly or indirectly contribute to the fulfilment of sustainable development targets.

The European Union reconfirms the commitments it undertook in Rio de Janeiro. We commit ourselves again to providing the substantial new and additional concessional financial resources necessary for the early and progressive implementation of Agenda 21.

The European Union member States will do their best at least to stop the downward trend in development assistance and will do their utmost to reverse this trend, so that more countries will reach the 0.7 per cent target of official development assistance. We commit ourselves to providing resources for Africa as well as for the poorest countries elsewhere. Since Rio, quite a few initiatives have been taken to implement programmes for sustainable development in specific areas. We will work together with other countries to implement these programmes and will make adequate resources available to this end. However, the European Union, as a big donor, insists on a fair burden-sharing, both with traditional donors and with new countries in a position to do so.

With respect to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the European Union is ready to reconfirm the existing mandate and to commit itself to a solid strengthening of the Facility, amongst other things, by a solid replenishment.

In less than three years, we will enter a new millennium. Let us make sure that we make a contribution towards a truly sustainable development on the threshold of that era.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for his statement.

Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Aznar (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Undoubtedly, we are living through times of individual and social challenges that make it necessary for us to find innovative solutions, both nationally and internationally. Now, as we approach a new century for which there is no charted route nor precise map to follow, we must seek solutions to current and future problems.

We have witnessed spectacular changes in the sphere of technology and economic globalization that have deeply transformed the world as we knew it. And, amidst such great progress, we have seen that nature, which in the past was considered to be resilient and inexhaustible, is in fact vulnerable and limited.

The results of Rio are written proof of the awareness of mankind that it is only through the conservation of the environment that can we aspire to a decent life. They reflect the moral obligation to bequeath to our descendants a world that they can live in, a duty to avoid the ethical gap between the traditional Western systems and the emergence of new technologies to which Hans Jonas made reference.

The environment is a common heritage of mankind of which we are the custodians, not the capricious owners. We have no right to waste resources of which we would be unjustly depriving our children. The very

fact that we are not satisfied with the progress made since Rio and our resolve to improve its results confirm the value that we attach to that ethical framework accepted by us all.

We must overcome the obstacles encountered in the practical implementation of the concept of sustainable development. We therefore fully endorse the goals set forth by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. The programme to be developed is extensive and there are two priorities: the eradication of poverty and changing production and consumption habits.

Poverty offends any apparent progress of a society, because it implies the loss of human capabilities and is accompanied by deficiencies in nutrition, education, health and access to productive resources. In addition, we must undertake a new technological revolution that enables us to produce better by using fewer resources and less energy. Responsible consumption must be part and parcel of social awareness in developed and developing countries alike, because even if we have different circumstances, our problems are common to all and there is only one nature. Our use of scarce natural resources must therefore be efficient.

The idea of sustainability must be integrated into every national society through economically viable and socially acceptable reforms, with changes that promote the role of civil society and the work of citizens in a democratic framework. Respect for human rights is a precondition for development, as are governability, equality and respect for the heritage of indigenous peoples concerning traditional knowledge and sustainable practices.

Together we must create a favourable international economic environment and a suitable trade policy within the World Trade Organization (WTO). The international financial institutions are increasingly including this in their programmes, and the developed countries must make an additional effort to satisfactorily replenish existing funds.

But we must also attract other actors. The participation of the private sector is fundamental, as it has and receives a large part of the new technologies. Direct foreign investment is a powerful tool for change. This requires a flexible multilateral framework and, in the receiving countries, an adequate body of law and the mobilization of internal resources. Development cooperation is an effective supplementary tool to the former.

To achieve these goals and to encourage individual responsibility towards our common environment, educating young people and society in general is our best possible tool. Protection of the environment must be a clear priority in our educational policies.

I represent a country that has carried out a fast-paced modernization process and that is also aware of the dilemmas inherent in development and of the assaults upon the environment. I come from a land of fragile ecosystems on the shores of a threatened sea, and I belong to a people that throughout its history has looked up to the sky in search of the drought-relieving rains.

The Mediterranean basin is a clear example of a shared natural resource, the preservation of which is necessary to us all. We share with other European and African countries the problems of desertification, drought, erosion, loss of plant cover and the non-sustainable use of soil. That is why we urge the promotion of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the implementation of Annex IV on the Mediterranean. Likewise, forests are essential for life and biodiversity, which is why we must reach an agreement to draft a convention on the protection of forests. Because of our Mediterranean identity, the promotion of sustainable tourism is also a priority for us, as is the proper management of water availability and water demand.

The values we apply in our country are the same as the values embodied in our official development assistance. We have specific technologies adapted to the use of scarce resources and very diverse ecosystems, and we are ready to share our knowledge and expertise. That is why 35 per cent of our bilateral non-refundable aid is devoted to programmes with an environmental component.

The araucaria is an American tree that can reach a height of up to 50 metres. Its leaves are always green, and it covers large expanses of forest on this continent. We have given the name Araucaria Project to a plan that will protect five geographical areas of rich biodiversity, highly representative of the major American ecosystems. In its implementation and follow-up we will work together with Ibero-American civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. I sincerely believe that this programme, and the many other conservation programmes through the world, represent the surest guarantee of our common future.

The President: I thank the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for his statement.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M.P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M.P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Blair (United Kingdom): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of this special session.

This is my fifth international meeting in eight weeks in office. My three young children in London say that I am not enough at home. But I know that this is one summit they would really want me to be at, because they know that the decisions here will have a profound effect on the world that they inherit. So I speak to you not just as the new British Prime Minister, but as a father.

Three principles should guide us as we strive to protect the environment for future generations.

First, we must give everyone a stake in the world's environment. That is why the fall in aid flows since 1992 is so worrying; why my Government supports the United Nations aid target; and why we are committed to improving further the quality of our assistance, reversing the decline in Britain's development assistance, and refocusing our efforts on combating poverty. We shall give priority to the poorest countries, including in Africa.

At the Denver summit, I committed the United Kingdom to raising by 50 per cent our bilateral support for health, education and water projects in Africa, and we believe in the objective of halving abject poverty in the world by the year 2015.

Reducing poverty is in our own interests. The poverty of landless and desperate people causes most of the destruction of the rainforests. And it is the reduction of the rainforest, the lungs of the world, that threatens the stability of our own climate.

I hope this week we will agree to start negotiations on a forest convention. It takes less than an hour to fell a tree, but it can take a lifetime to replace it. If we are serious about sustainable development, we must show that we are serious about sustainable forestry management.

Britain has long experience of the public and private management of forests. We are keen to share that experience. Today, I can announce that we intend to adopt a new forest standard to provide a benchmark for the regeneration of our forests. It may help provide a model for other countries. So I can announce that Britain will be increasing our development assistance for forestry management to countries wanting to share our expertise.

There is a liquid more precious than oil — water. Yet while some countries expect running water on tap, too many people in the same world get through the day on what they can carry back from the morning trip to the well. Britain will play its part in developing an action plan to ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation. I hope progress this week will lead to real results at next year's Commission on Sustainable Development.

Five years ago, the Rio Summit launched Agenda 21. Since then, in Britain 70 per cent of our local authorities have been inspired to "think globally, act locally" through Local Agenda 21. But we must do more. I want all local authorities in the United Kingdom to adopt Local Agenda 21 strategies by the year 2000.

Perhaps the most worrying problem is climate change. If greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise unabated, by the year 2100 global temperatures will have gone up by 1 to 3.5 degrees centigrade, and sea levels risen by perhaps as much as a metre. Some small islands are seriously at risk. So the European Union has proposed the new and challenging target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries to 15 per cent below their 1990 level by the year 2010. In Britain we would be ready to go further, to a 20 per cent target. This target will require significant measures: more efficient use of transport, improved energy conservation, and greater use of renewable sources of energy.

Many of you were at Rio. It was an exciting event. Environmental issues dominated politics and the media. Challenges were laid down, targets set.

I attacked the last British Government for many things. But it did deliver on the greenhouse gas emission target set at Rio.

Some other countries cannot say the same, including some of the great industrialized nations. I say that our targets will not be taken seriously by the poorer countries until we, the richer countries, are meeting them.

To be really effective, we must act globally. At Kyoto, industrialized countries must agree upon legally binding targets for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions during the first decade of the next century. The biggest responsibility falls on those countries with the biggest emissions. We in Europe have now put our cards on the table. It is time for the special pleading to stop and for others to follow suit. If we fail at Kyoto, we fail our children, because the consequences will be felt in their lifetime. And we must all deliver on the commitments that we make. Setting new targets means little if old ones are ignored.

At the same time, industrialized countries must work with developing countries to help them combat climate change, biodiversity loss and other global environmental challenges. We must live up to our side of the bargain and ensure that they have the resources to do this. So the United Kingdom supports the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. And we propose to enhance the United Kingdom's partnership with key developing countries in energy efficiency and climate change research and observation.

We are all in this together. No country can opt out of global warming or fence in its own private climate. We need common action to save our common environment. The Earth is the only planet in the solar system with an environment that can sustain life. Our solemn duty as leaders of the world is to treasure that precious heritage and to hand on to our children and grandchildren an environment that will enable them to enjoy the same full life that we took for granted. And indeed young people themselves have an important part to play in all of this.

Like other nations, Britain is now preparing to mark the coming millennium. But the millennium project on which we must all work is to rescue the global environment so that it can nurture life in all our countries for another thousand years and more. Let us show this week that we have the vision to rise to the task and the commitment to see it through.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his statement.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M. P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I give the floor now to His Excellency Mr. Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Kohl (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation*): At the outset, let me, on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, express our full support for the statement made earlier by the President of the European Union, Mr. Wim Kok.

At the close of the century, mankind has epochal opportunities which we would not have deemed possible even a short time ago. The end of the East-West conflict has brought us significantly closer to world peace. At the same time there is an increasing awareness worldwide that the preservation of Creation is just as much a task for the international community as the safeguarding of peace.

The 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development showed the way towards a twenty-first-century global environment partnership. Since then, much has been achieved but unfortunately it is also true that the main trends of global pollution have still not been reversed. The crucial question for our generation is how we can permanently safeguard the natural basis of life for a growing world population. In view of the shrinking reserves of potable water, possible unpredictable climate changes and the spread of deserts, this question becomes all the more urgent. We have no more time to lose.

If we fail to take up this challenge now, conflicts over natural resources will become ever more likely. Even today, millions of people all over the world are forced to leave their homes because of the destruction of the natural basis for their existence.

However, there are also developments that give us cause for hope. We now possess, if we did but wish to use them, the knowledge and the means durably to protect man's natural sources of life for the future. The

message of Rio 1992 remains valid: to regard environmental and development issues as two sides of the same coin and, finally, to act accordingly. More and more people searching for food, energy and housing are depleting natural resources faster than they can be replaced. For this reason too we must combat poverty in the developing world more vigorously than we have done in the past.

The industrial countries must still play their part by providing economic aid and modern technology. But this means in turn that the developing nations themselves must do what they can to create the conditions for healthy development. The industrial and threshold countries must make sure that their own economic growth does not also mean an increase in pollution.

Here at this session in New York, five years after Rio, we must set the course towards substantial progress. I see the following principal areas of action both as a necessity and as an opportunity to take a major step forward.

First, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held at Berlin in April 1995, laid the foundation for a global climate protection agreement. This special session of the General Assembly should ask the conference to be held at Kyoto at the end of this year to formulate an international agreement to reduce markedly the emission of greenhouse gases. The industrial countries should adopt the agreed position and goal of the European Union to cut the levels of the main greenhouse gases by 15 per cent by the year 2010.

Secondly, forests, especially vital rain forests, are still being destroyed, and this is why we need binding international agreements on the protection and sustainable use of forests — and we need them now, not years from now when it will be too late to save these vital rain forests.

Thirdly, global environment protection and sustainable development need a clearly audible voice at the United Nations. Therefore, in the short term, I think it is important that cooperation among the various environmental organizations be significantly improved. In the medium term this should lead to the creation of a global umbrella organization for environmental issues, with the United Nations Environment Programme as a major pillar.

Fourthly, the aim of a global environment partnership during the coming century should also find expression in the Charter of the United Nations.

In the past, political differences between North and South have often influenced discussions on global environmental protection and have all too often made progress difficult. For this reason I, together with President Cardoso of Brazil, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore and Deputy President Mbeki of South Africa, have decided to launch a joint initiative which, by taking these themes as examples, is designed to demonstrate that it is possible for North and South to take joint action on this vital issue for mankind.

By making this very personal commitment we seek to lend additional impetus to the worldwide protection of the natural sources of life and the idea of sustainable development, and we hope that we thus also help make this special session of the General Assembly a success.

Today, five years after Rio and two years after the conference in Berlin, people all over the world are looking to New York with new hope. They are waiting for us to send out a true and clear signal of a new dawn for the protection of the basic resources of life. The protection of creation — that is our responsibility to the generations to come.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for his statement.

Mr. Helmut Kohl, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Chirac (*interpretation from French*): For our planet, modernity, which is perhaps the same thing as maturity, is the capacity to judge itself, to think ahead in matters of growth and progress and to bring technological advances under control so that they are primarily of benefit to man.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Five years after Rio, this special session of the United Nations General Assembly is another appointment our planet has with itself. The purpose is to assess the dangers that continue to threaten it, to measure what has been accomplished and to define what remains to be done in order to achieve sustainable development that is harmonious and that combines economic growth, democratic progress and respect for the environment.

Rio marked the beginning of a new awareness. It was an essential step, but it is still not enough. Certain age-old convictions that the twentieth century has rendered obsolete are still only too present in our minds. Thus, it is wrong to believe that nature has the capacity to heal all the wounds inflicted on it by mankind. There are animal and plant species that have disappeared for ever. There are enormous expanses of forest that will never grow again because the soil has disappeared with the trees.

It is also presumptuous to claim that man, through his intelligence, will always be able to repair the damage wrought in the name of progress. No one knows how to reconstitute the ozone layer. No one will know how to correct the global warming caused by the greenhouse effect.

Having learned from experience, we now realize that the precautionary principle must be applied everywhere. We know this. But, five years after Rio, we must see clearly and humbly that much remains to be done in order for this principle to inspire decisions and actions. The important thing today, therefore, is to set ourselves simple, concrete but ambitious goals for the next five years.

First of all, let us finish the work of building the edifice of international rules that the precautionary principle demands. Let us agree in December at Kyoto on the aims and the modalities of our common fight against the greenhouse effect. France and its European Union partners have shown the way.

Before the end of the year, let us start to negotiate the necessary convention for the protection of our forests. My friend Chancellor Helmut Kohl has just spoken forcefully on this subject. I unreservedly support his appeal.

Finally, let us define our commitments regarding the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

In order to implement these texts, to monitor their implementation and to foster respect for the environment everywhere, the United Nations must have renewed and more efficient institutions centred on two hubs: Nairobi and Geneva. It must also have adequate means. The Global Environment Facility, set up thanks to a French and German initiative, plays a central role. I hope that the contributing countries meeting in Paris in September will agree to a fair replenishment of its resources. France, the world's third largest donor of official development assistance, will contribute its full share.

Among all the issues linked to the fight against poverty and the protection of the environment, there is one to which I attach particular importance: the question of water. Mankind runs a major risk of a shortage of fresh water. Consumption is increasing twice as fast as population growth, doubling every 20 years. At the turn of the century, the amount of fresh water available per capita in Africa will only be a quarter of what it was in 1950, and a third in Asia and in Latin America. Water is a source of life, but could well become a major source of conflict.

Fresh water is becoming more and more scarce and more and more threatened by pollution of all kinds. According to the World Health Organization, each year 25 million human beings — of whom 4 million are children — die of diseases linked to water pollution.

France, with the support of the entire European Union, has submitted proposals to the Commission on Sustainable Development I hope that will lead to concrete programmes and to a global partnership. It is urgent that we mobilize our resources around a few major projects.

Let us decide together that in 10 years time every village in the third world, particularly in Africa, will have its own well or access to drinking water.

Let us decide together to use the next 10 years to halve the number of urban homes that either have no access to drinking water or are not linked to a sanitation network.

Let us decide together to draw up and distribute throughout the world, in rural areas and in cities, simple rules for prudent water management.

In order to define more precisely our objectives and to mobilize still further all the necessary resources, France welcomes the World Water Council to Marseilles

and proposes to host at the beginning of next year a conference that will bring together all the actors in water management policy: Governments, local authorities, international organizations, associations and businesses. This conference would be part of the process of drafting the action plan that the Commission on Sustainable Development should adopt at its next session, in spring 1998.

Man's capacity for invention and the power he has given himself to modify the environment must be counterbalanced by one essential requirement — a sense of responsibility.

Today, it is our responsibility to protect our planet. How effective our action will be depends first and foremost on our common will and on the impetus that together we will give to this ambitious plan. There is great urgency. An attack on nature is, in fact, an attack on humankind.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I thank His Excellency the President of the French Republic for his statement.

Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Márquez, Vice-President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Ricardo Márquez, Vice-President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Márquez (Peru) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is a great honour to represent the people and the Government of Peru at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, which has been convened to take stock of the results of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and, five years on, to reaffirm international cooperation and the common but differentiated responsibilities that, constitute the core of Agenda 21 and the bases for the implementation of its commitments.

We are sure that under the able and experienced guidance of its President, the General Assembly will attain the objectives the international community hopes will come out of this special session.

The environment cannot be protected solely by the actions of environmentalists.

In Peru, Agenda 21 represents the new paradigm of sustainable human development. What we call the "Peru agenda" is Agenda 21's operational equivalent at the national level, and it provides the orientation and guidelines for national development and environmental policies. The Peru agenda has been designed to integrate economic, social, technological and environmental dimensions, thus reconciling the imperatives of economic efficiency, social and human development, and the respect we owe to nature. I must recall here that the ancient Peruvians were able to achieve that admirable synthesis in their social and political organization. Their example provides lasting inspiration for present-day Peru.

Poverty is both a cause and an effect of the destruction of the environment. Overcoming poverty and its attendant exclusion and inequality is the primary aim of the Government of President Fujimori. At the forefront of this national effort is our population policy, which combines enhancement of the key role of women in society with access by all Peruvians to basic health services, education, housing and justice and gives priority to the least advantaged and most vulnerable sectors. Social expenditure in Peru now accounts for more than 40 per cent of the national budget, and the trend is upward. However, we are aware that it is not merely a matter of allocating resources. The most important thing is to determine rationally how and in whom to invest them.

Thus, it is worth pointing out that participation by civil society jointly with governmental bodies is growing ever more important and dynamic in Peru. Both factors form part of a pattern of harmonizing interests, policies and priorities that, as in other countries, led to the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in December 1996.

At this point, Peru wishes to express its concern at the possibility that declining international cooperation for development is becoming a structural characteristic of the globalization process now under way.

The developing countries hope that this special session of the General Assembly will help reverse that trend, or at least that we will be able to reaffirm and fulfil the commitments undertaken in 1992. Of course, we also need new, specific commitments to finance the

various conventions that are part of the process that began in Rio.

The use of trade restrictions for environmental ends is still highly controversial and puts intense pressure on developing countries. At the Rio Summit, we agreed that sustainable development requires trade liberalization, mutually supportive trade and environmental policies and the transfer of adequate financial and technological resources to help developing countries towards the achievement of that aim. However, five years later, the results are not positive. These issues, especially the financial and technological issues related to the environment, have taken a back seat.

Peru has established the legal basis for an environmental policy. Its legal system contains rules for the protection and defence of the environment. Some of these rules are of a general nature, such as the Environment Code, the law establishing the National Environment Fund, the Law on Natural Resources, the law creating the National Environment Council (CONAM) and other specific laws relating to wild flora and fauna, genetic resources, pollution and the protection of highly sensitive environmental areas.

One of the most notable aspects of Peru's modernization in recent years is the process of sustainable human development. In this context, institutional actors, such as public and private bodies, have been very active in initiatives and experimentation. Noteworthy among these groups are local governments, non-governmental organizations, indigenous populations and the church. In academic circles, too, activities that are central to environmental management have been discussed.

The Government of Peru has designated 1997 as the Year for reforestation, and 100 million trees will be planted. This decision is an expression of Peru's awareness of and commitment to a matter that is vital to our future, and one that we consider to be a priority for the entire international community. It is well known that Peru ranks among the countries having the most abundant natural resources on Earth: vast tropical forests and mega-biodiversity that is greatly admired all over the world. In this domain, our indigenous peoples possess an ancient mastery and knowledge of approximately 1,300 species of plants with medicinal properties.

Peru is an Amazonian country. Given its geographical magnitude, its exceptional bio-diversity and the role it plays as a macro-regulator of climates and water resources, the Amazon region clearly has extraordinary potential to take the lead in the large-scale implementation of a modern civilization with a biomass that is protected in the sustainable use of renewable resources. Consequently, the policy of sustainable development of the Amazon, including the preservation of its vast resources, constitutes a contribution to a global sustainable-development strategy by Peru and all the member countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty.

The great challenge of sustainable development is to continue to develop the capacity to design and implement international programmes that involve Governments, multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations prepared to support the efforts of our peoples, whose aspirations and aims will be reaffirmed in the General Assembly through this review and assessment, harmonizing all the interests of the international community in a balanced and equitable manner.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Peru for his statement.

Mr. Ricardo Márquez, Vice-President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakstan.

Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakstan, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Nazarbaev (*interpretation from Russian*): The agenda of this special session of the United Nations General Assembly vividly reflects the whole range of formidable challenges facing mankind on the eve of a new century. Because of the globalization of international relations, it has become necessary to reject old stereotypes, technocratic approaches and attempts to achieve economic growth at any cost. It is therefore very important to adhere strictly to the principles of the Rio Declaration, ensuring that economic growth takes place only in relationship to processes of social development and environmental security.

In this respect, is it possible to talk about well-being when we refer to the 300 million people living in the newly independent States? Absolutely not, because that

area, which occupies one sixth of the world's surface, still lacks both sustainable in terms of economic development and environmental security. In carrying out reforms, these States have to face considerable social costs. The experience of the majority of the post-socialist countries shows that the reforms and the social aspects of economic development are in conflict with each other. In other words, the social price of the reforms is high. However, the only alternative to the reforms is stagnation, poverty and hopelessness.

For half a century the territory of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics witnessed pollution from production facilities that defied ecological control. Thousands of enterprises were established that did not meet the most basic environmental-protection requirements. As a result, nature was violated and, unfortunately, it continues to be. Such effects on the environment have, indeed, been globalized.

By the beginning of the next century this process will be intensified. As they develop their natural resources, many States with economies in transition may well become the main polluters of the environment. I am sure that the international community does not want this to happen and would prefer all production facilities to be clean and ecologically safe and produce little waste. That is why the United Nations should play a more active role in the intensive exchange of clean technologies and their transfer to countries with economies in transition. I believe that the United Nations could create a mechanism, similar to that of the Coordinating Committee on Export Control (COCOM), that would control the non-proliferation of polluting, toxic and hazardous technologies and industries.

Each country, however, should deal with the task of sustainable development largely on its own. We have therefore defined our own strategy and tactics for economic reform and have achieved considerable progress in this respect. During its five years of independence, Kazakstan has completely changed its system of economic and social relations. Macroeconomic stabilization has been achieved, the privatization of all State property has almost been completed and a trend towards a growth in output is emerging.

There are global problems that many countries cannot solve alone, however. In these situations, the international community should come to the rescue. In the case of Kazakstan, the problems include the many years of tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground and the disappearance of the Aral Sea. The Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground used to be the largest in the world; its size was comparable with that of the territory of many States: 18.5 thousand square kilometres. Some 470 explosions, representing about 70 per cent of all the nuclear- weapon tests of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, were conducted there, causing enormous damage to the health of the population and to the natural environment.

We consider this issue from the point of view of fundamental principle. Nuclear weapons represent a tragedy not only for the people of Kazakstan, but for all the nations of the world. That is why we have every reason to speak about the responsibility of the nuclear Powers for the damage caused to the population and the natural environment of the States where tests have been conducted. Kazakstan proposes that the nuclear Powers should make concrete their responsibility in this respect by creating an international fund for the rehabilitation of the health of the population and the environment in regions affected by nuclear- weapon tests.

We are also seriously concerned about the global aspects of the problem of the Aral Sea, which is practically disappearing from the map. This tragedy casts a shadow over the entire world and the whole of civilization. The region is witnessing the fundamental degradation of the environment, a disastrous shortage of fresh water, the rapid worsening of the health of the population and an increase in forced migration. This ecological disaster area, which has a population of more than 4 million people, reaches into the territory of all the Central Asian States.

We and a number of international organizations have come up with various projects designed to solve the problems of the Aral Sea. None of them, however, has been completed. Each State of the region is still dealing with ecological disasters on its own; this disaster, however, has global dimensions. Particles of salt sediment from the Aral Sea have been found in Europe and in the Arctic Ocean.

Moreover, the world community cannot ignore these tragedies because Central Asia is a new geopolitical and geoeconomic reality. In the twenty-first century, this region will become a major supplier of hydrocarbons to the world markets. The Kazakstan part of the Caspian Sea has more than 15 billion tonnes of hydrocarbon raw materials whose development will involve practically all the industrialized countries. It is therefore necessary to solve the ecological problems of the region today if we do not want to deal with their metastases tomorrow.

I believe that it might be possible to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, a so-called "inventory" of global problems, which can be addressed at two levels, the first requiring the participation of the world community as a whole, and the second requiring regional and national intervention.

When we speak of the importance of these issues, we turn to the United Nations, on which we continue to pin our hopes for a new world order. I wish Secretary-General Kofi Annan success in his efforts to ensure the efficiency of the United Nations. I also wish the special session success in developing approaches to the questions of sustainable development and solving the problem of improving our planet's climate, thereby bearing out the hopes of present and future generations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Republic of Kazakstan for his statement.

Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakstan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Prodi (Italy): When the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development met in Rio in 1992, the world was confronted with a twofold challenge: to make development compatible with the sustainability of the environment and to insure a more balanced and global, long-lasting development. Five years later, we live in a world with more pollution, more consumption of natural resources and more waste, but with less biodiversity, less forest area, less available fresh water, less soil and a depleted stratospheric ozone layer in some regions of the planet.

Today, humanity as a whole uses over one third more resources and eco-services than nature can regenerate. In 1992, this ecological deficit was only one quarter. Five years after the Rio Conference, we are further away from sustainability.

This special session of the General Assembly provides us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development and to a pragmatic, result-oriented implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The notion of sustainable development, adopted by the Rio Conference, is the key principle by which the implementation of Agenda 21 should be guided. Today, however, sustainable development remains a rather abstract principle, whose degree of application in policy development and implementation at the national and regional levels has thus far been inadequate. This inadequacy is one of the main causes of the shortcomings that have been experienced during the past five years.

Integration is fundamental in sustainable development. It is the only way to ensure that the three pillars of Agenda 21 — economic development, social development and environmental protection — are considered together and that sustainability is made operational. Of course, integration is possible only if appropriate institutional arrangements are in place — and institutional arrangements depend on political will.

Italy shares the general view that the eradication of poverty and sustainable patterns of consumption and production are fundamental goals of the international community and key issues on the agenda of the special session. With the right policies and international support, the number of people living in acute poverty could fall by half over the next quarter of a century. My country is ready to make all possible contributions to help the poorest countries to reduce poverty in the shortest possible time and to improve the quality of life of all sectors of their societies, including the full integration of women into the process of social and economic development. In this context, renewed attention must be focused on children's rights, especially supporting the projects aimed at creating child-friendly cities.

As far as the issue of sustainable patterns of consumption and production is concerned, we are convinced that developed countries should take the lead in the process of developing environmentally sound technologies and environmental policies, implementing the necessary changes in their own countries, while the newly industrialized countries should endeavour to reduce the stress that their fast rate of growth puts on the ecosystem.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the lowest-income countries should achieve fast social and economic improvements without reproducing our models of development and industrialization; the environmental

cost might otherwise be unsustainable. It is our duty to help these countries move towards more appropriate models of development. I would therefore like to state again our support for initiatives aimed at achieving the goals of sustainable development, such as the World Solar Programme in the energy field.

Financial resources are essential to sustainable development. Agenda 21 made it clear that progress towards socio-economic and environmental development would require additional investment and finance. At the time of Rio, almost all industrialized countries recommitted themselves to raising foreign assistance levels towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP). This has not materialized. On the contrary, development assistance as a share of donor countries' GNP decreased in the last five years. This downward trend needs to be reversed.

The transfer of environmentally friendly technologies and foreign private investments can also play a very important role in promoting sustainable development, but foreign private investors respond positively only to stable, well-managed economies with a track record of low inflation and correct policies. Therefore, donor countries and international financial institutions should join efforts to help those countries which have not yet succeeded in attracting private flows of capitals to create a more attractive business climate for foreign direct investments.

I fully share the position expressed by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. Kok, on behalf of the European Union, on the various issues on the agenda. In particular, Italy looks forward to the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Kyoto at the end of this year. The Conference should adopt realistic, quantified and legally binding commitments on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Linked to the protection of the atmosphere is the problem of deforestation. Italy supports the proposal to convene, as soon as possible, an intergovernmental negotiating committee.

My country has the honour to host the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which will be held in Rome from 29 September to 10 October 1997. As highlighted at the Denver Summit of the Eight, the Conference will mark the beginning of the implementation of the Convention by promoting effective plans of action — in the Mediterranean area, for example — and experiences of joint implementation, and will provide the opportunity to renew sound and concrete international cooperation through a better use of available resources to address this issue.

Progress in the past five years clearly has not been what we had hoped. If development is to become sustainable, greater efforts are needed, more human and material resources need to be mobilized and a more cost-effective use of available resources is necessary. Bad habits and wrong behaviour must change if we want to bequeath to the generations to come a better world for a better living. Governments, corporations, consumers and public agencies all need to abandon activities that degrade the environment and must invest in those activities which conserve ecosystems for the future.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister of the Italian Republic for his statement.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Menem (*interpretation from Spanish*): Those of us who had the privilege of participating in the Rio Conference in June 1992 come here today with particular interest to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

I should like to reiterate now what we said then: It is time for us to put a definitive end to the idea of choosing between economic development and the preservation of the environment. As was already stated in Agenda 21, we need to reaffirm today that only through policies that give priority to environmental issues and to forms of management that duly take into account the needs of regional and national economies can we move forward for the benefit of our peoples.

Argentina included in the reform of its national Constitution the right of all individuals to enjoy a healthy and balanced environment capable of satisfying their

present needs without jeopardizing those of future generations.

In order to achieve sustainable development, we must not only eradicate poverty but also eliminate wealth coupled with compulsive consumerism, which leads to unsustainable practices and lifestyles.

Policies designed to promote social and economic development may fail if they are not designed to include an environmental component. We must reconcile measures to preserve the environment and promote sustainable development with the promotion and preservation of an open, equitable and non-discriminatory multilateral trade system.

Humankind is facing a real crisis in terms of the availability of fresh water, which constitutes an economic and social asset whose quantity and quality must be preserved. My country attaches particular importance to the participation of private capital in expanding water supply and water treatment. At the regional level, we are working on developing joint programmes of action with relation to shared water resources.

As to the conservation of our ecosystem, we have, since the Rio Summit, created 10 new protected areas. Protected areas now cover a total of 147,000 square kilometres, representing the equivalent of 5.5 per cent of our continental territory. In 1997, five new national parks will be added. This continues the trend of the last five years, which saw the creation of 4,000 square kilometres of protected areas. These areas will help to guarantee our biodiversity and ensure that our native forests will be used in a sustainable manner.

Argentina, whose Atlantic coast spans over 4,000 kilometres, attaches great importance to the study and protection of the oceans. In this regard, the preservation of marine biological resources demands that non-overexploitative fishing practices be used, both in jurisdictional waters and on the high seas, beyond 200 miles. The third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea was an important but wholly insufficient step forward.

The United Nations should reaffirm its role as guarantor of a clear and workable legal framework to prevent disputes among States that fish beyond the 200-mile limit. We must ensure the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of all humankind. We are convinced that the overexploitation of marine resources may generate conflicts that could, in turn, endanger peace and security, the maintenance of which is the primary purpose of this Organization.

Environmental issues have acquired a global dimension. For this reason, we must take advantage of the synergy provided by regional structures. The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) has undertaken all the necessary studies to improve production systems in the framework of the concept of sustainable development.

As concerns multilateral cooperation, we are paying particular attention to international financial machinery. We believe that these mechanisms should be periodically reviewed in order to set priorities. It should be possible for the Commission on Sustainable Development to assess the degree of effectiveness and equity of allocation of financial resources.

Argentina wishes to reiterate its unequivocal support for the United Nations Environment Programme as "the international voice for the defence of the environment". We are confident that the recently created High-level Committee as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council, will play a dynamic role in determining and following up policies aimed at regional decentralization and adjustment of the Programme.

Significant progress towards sustainable development in Argentina is reflected in the country profile of the implementation of Agenda 21 presented by my Government. Nonetheless, it is equally clear that our efforts must still be increased. Here we must bear in mind that national actions are of the essence, but international cooperation is also necessary.

Twenty-five years ago, at the Stockholm Conference, Juan Domingo Perón, who three times was President of Argentina, pleaded for a change of course in the suicidal path being followed by the world — a path of environmental pollution and the waste of natural resources.

I believe that the Rio de Janeiro Conference signalled that change of direction for humankind that President Perón had called for. Now that we are walking together along the right path, we must step up our pace, and as President Perón said,

> "It is better to act than to speak; it is better to act than to promise".

The time has come to set aside promises; the time has come to take action.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I thank the President of the Argentine Republic for his statement.

Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.